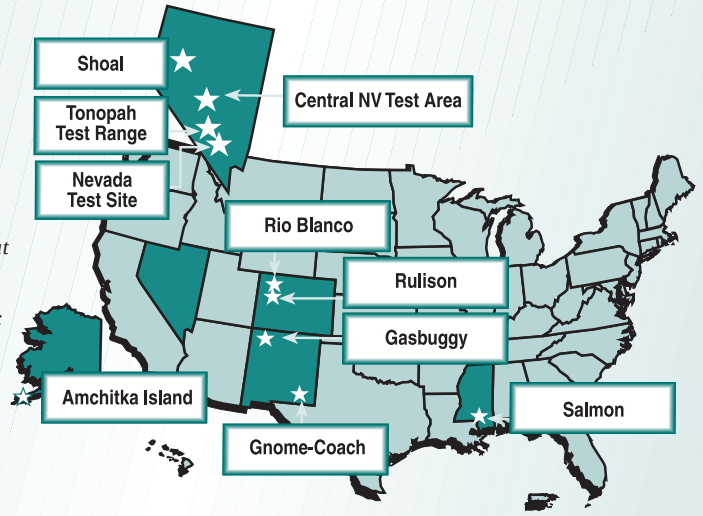
E.5 Nevada Operations Office Summary

For over 40 years, the primary mission of the Department of Energy's Nevada Operations Office (DOE/NV) was to conduct research, development, and testing of nuclear devices. Most testing took place at the Nevada Test Site, but nuclear testing activities have also been conducted at eight off-site locations in five different states.

Nevada Operations Office

The Nevada Operations Office manages facilities on the Nevada Test Site, which covers 1,350 square miles of land about 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada. In addition, the Nevada Operations Office is responsible for environmental management at off-site test areas where radiological contamination has occurred including: Amchitka Island (Alaska); Central Nevada Test Site (Nevada); Project Chariot (Alaska); Project Gasbuggy (New Mexico); Project Gnome-Coach (New Mexico); Project Rulison (Colorado); Project Rio Blanco (Colorado); Project Salmon (Mississippi); and Project Shoal (Nevada).



The ***Nevada Test Site (NTS)*** is located in a remote region of Nevada and is roughly the size of the State of Rhode Island. In addition to weapons testing, the Nevada Test Site has hosted secondary missions including: neutron and gamma-ray interaction studies; open air reactor, nuclear engine, and nuclear furnace tests; hazardous materials spill response testing; and a variety of other experiments involving radioactive and non-radioactive materials conducted by the Department of Defense.

Amchitka Island was the site of three underground nuclear detonations conducted in October 1965, October 1969, and November 1971. These tests were conducted for seismic testing, calibration, and warhead development.

The ***Central Nevada Test Site*** was used for one subsurface nuclear test, Project Faultless, detonated in January 1968. The Department conducted the test to determine the suitability of the area for additional testing. It also conducted nonnuclear special experiments to determine the behavior of seismic waves.

The ***Gnome-Coach*** and ***Gasbuggy Sites*** were part of the Plowshare program, which was a series of nuclear and conventional tests conducted by the Atomic Energy Commission to explore peacetime uses of nuclear explosives. The Project Gnome test was conducted in bedded salt in December 1961. The Gasbuggy Site was the location of a single subsurface nuclear test in December 1967.

The ***Rio Blanco*** and ***Rulison*** tests, also part of the Plowshare program, were designed to increase natural gas production from low-permeability sandstone. The Project Rulison detonation took place in September 1969 in a sandstone formation. The Project Rio Blanco consisted of the nearly simultaneous detonation of three devices in a deep well in May 1973.

The ***Salmon Site*** was used for two nuclear detonations, Salmon and Sterling, to evaluate the seismic response of salt deposits to nuclear explosives. Salmon Site was also the location for two nonnuclear gas detonations used for seismic decoupling studies in the Miracle Play Program. The Department conducted the Salmon test in the Tatum Salt Dome in October 1964. It detonated the Sterling test in the Salmon cavity in December 1966.

The ***Project Shoal Site*** nuclear test was conducted in October 1963. The purpose of the test was to determine the effect of a nuclear detonation in a granite rock formation and to compare the seismic activity of natural earthquakes with activity from an underground nuclear explosion.

The ***Tonopah Test Range***, northwest of the Nevada Test Site, is used by the Department of Energy's Albuquerque Operations Office and the Department of Defense for research and development of ordnance delivery systems, electronic combat training missions, and other activities. The Nevada Operations Office has environmental restoration responsibilities for historic DOE/NV testing activities conducted at the site. For planning and control purposes, the Tonopah Test Range is considered to be part of the NTS.

E.5.1 End State

The Nevada Test Site is a Defense Programs site. The primary mission of the site is nuclear stockpile stewardship including the maintenance of readiness to conduct underground nuclear tests as directed. Decisions regarding future land use on the Nevada Test Site are awaiting completion of the Resource Management Plan, which is scheduled for completion in October 1998. Future land uses for the Nevada Test Site, as well as potential uses of facilities that are to be decontaminated and decommissioned are being developed at this time in compliance with commitments contained in the Nevada Test Site Environmental Impact Statement. Decisions involving resource management, future land use, and private development will be done in partnership with the interests of the Department of Energy, national laboratories, the U.S. Air Force, the Bureau of Land Management, Tribal Nations, State and local agencies, and stakeholders.

Responsibility for land use on the Tonapah Test Range falls within the purview of the Department of Defense, U.S. Air Force. The Department of Defense is in the